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PROGRAM The Today Show

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Jordan's King Hussein Discusses Mideast Peace Process

BRYANT GUMBEL: Secretary of State James Baker leaves Tuesday for the Soviet Union, the first stop before a Mideast mission designed to advance the idea of a peace conference tentatively scheduled for sometime in October.

Jordan would, of course, be one of the primary participants in such a conference. This morning Jordan's King Hussein is in our bureau in London.

Your Majesty, good morning.

KING HUSSEIN: Good morning to you, Bryant.

GUMBEL: You have supported the idea of a peace conference. At this point, how do you view the likelihood that it will ever be realized?

KING HUSSEIN: I am very hopeful that it will be realized. I think that this is a very important moment in history, in terms of the world and certainly in terms of our region. And although all the details are not finally available to me, I look forward to the visit of the Secretary of State, James Baker, and I hope that we will move that much closer to the realization of a dream, beginning with the conference and the peace process, in the very near future.

GUMBEL: Although you have already agreed to attend the peace conference, Your Majesty, you are still awaiting PLO approval to form a joint delegation with the Palestinians. If the Palestinians choose not to attend the conference, will you?

KING HUSSEIN: The answer is that we are in agreement with our friends in the world. Particularly, the understanding I

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have is that the Palestinians will elect their representatives to this conference. We have offered an umbrella of a joint delegation to attend the conference, where the Palestinians will represent themselves regarding the dimension of the problem with Israel. We will of course in Jordan, with all Jordanians, represent ourselves and our interests. And we will be working on a third level, which is the regional level.

So, until now, nothing is very, very clear as to the formation of the delegation. But if there is a process for peace and what is sought is a comprehensive peace, we'll definitely be there.

GUMBEL: Prime Minister Shamir said this morning that he would pull Israel out of the peace conference if he weren't satisfied with the composition of the Palestinian delegation. What's your reaction to that statement?

KING HUSSEIN: My reaction is that the least said, the better. And the most important element now is to take advantage of this moment. And there is no other option or alternative to moving towards resolving this chronic problem, the root cause of instability in our region.

So, I think we should move away from old cliches and positions, and we should leave them to the time when we negotiate to implement Security Council Resolution 242 and 338, to realize legitimate rights on Palestinian soil, the security of Israel, and to finally give everybody a chance to move away from this problem and to a better future for all the people in the region and for generations to come.

GUMBEL: Yet even as you talk about getting away from that rhetoric, your government has asked the United States for assurances of implementation of 242 and 338 in advance of the conference. In the absence of such assurances, are you still willing to attend?

KING HUSSEIN: We have asked for clarifications here and there as regards the United States' position, but we have sought no prior assurances. I believe we are starting a process that would require all to see what is at stake and what the promise of the future is. And as far as we are concerned, we'd like to certainly know what the United States' position is on certain aspects of the problem. But beyond that, we hope that the process itself will produce the answers. And we know that the foundations for a solution are.

GUMBEL: Final question. Your government applauded the U.S. decision to delay loan guarantees to Israel. Do you view that decision as an effective prod with which to force Israel to the peace table?

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KING HUSSEIN: I wish not to antagonize any. And I would say that it shows, to a degree, only that the United States is interested in playing a constructive role in bringing about a Palestinian-Israeli and an Arab-Israeli settlement of the problem, not only with the countries immediately around Israel, but within the region as a whole.

GUMBEL: King Hussein of Jordan.

Your Majesty, thank you very much for being with us. It's very much appreciated.

KING HUSSEIN: Thank you so much. My pleasure.

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